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ABSTRACT

The Saskatchewan Older Adult Literacy Survey involved 16 literacy programs offered by the regional colleges, public libraries, and technical institutes throughout the province of Saskatchewan, Canada. The 2-month survey acquired information for an overview of the current state of older adults and literacy in Saskatchewan through mailed questionnaires and structured telephone interviews with 14 literacy program coordinators. Learners were found to vary in age, gender, cultural heritage, income levels, and rural/urban origins. Reasons for participation in literacy programs were diverse: independence, self-esteem, enhanced quality of life, and security. Barriers to older adults' participation in literacy programs were as follows: negative attitudes toward self and ability to learn, stigma, misconceptions of others about the learning abilities of older adults, and gaps in current literacy programming. The roots of illiteracy ranged from environmental factors to traditional gender roles. Older adults could be reached if programs were made accessible and relevant, if a peer tutoring system were created, and if programs were promoted as lifelong learning. Ideas to meet older adult learners' needs are suggested: educational resource development, relevant learning and teaching approaches, and the center's role as an educator and information clearinghouse on literacy and the older adult. (Appendixes include instruments, data tables and figures.) (YLB)

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University of Regina — *University Extension*

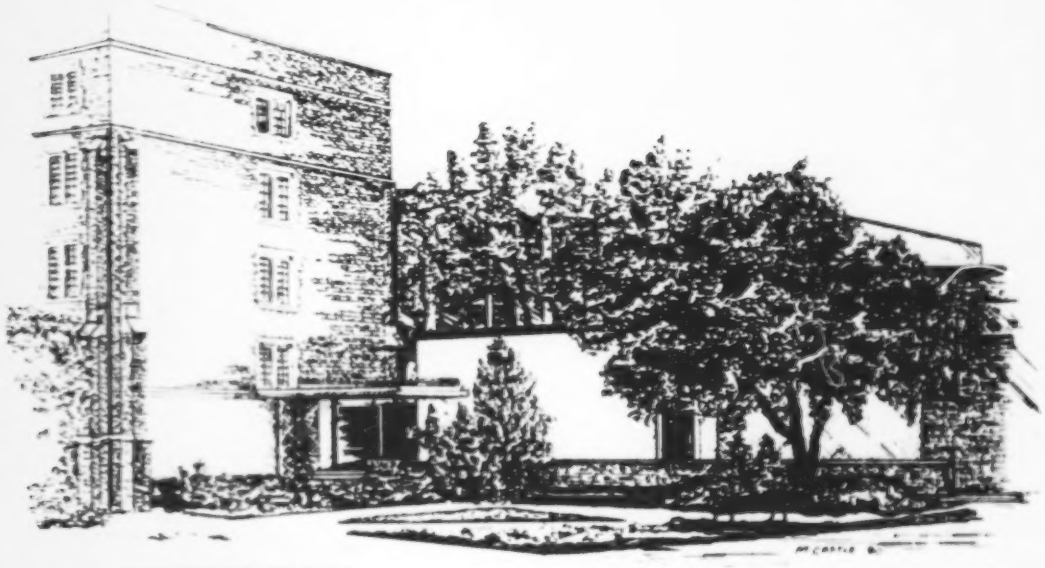
SENIORS' UNIVERSITY GROUP

ED 366 736

SASKATCHEWAN
OLDER ADULT LITERACY SURVEY

FINAL REPORT

JULY 30, 1992



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND FOREWORD

The Older Adult Literacy Survey Report represents the final results of the research conducted by Diane Mullan, project coordinator, under the supervision of John Oussoren, Director of the Seniors' Education Centre, University Extension, University of Regina.

The project was funded by a grant from Seniors' Independence Program, Health and Welfare Canada. Appreciation is expressed to Larry Flynn, Program Representative, Social Service Programs Branch, for making this project possible.

The voluntary participation of fourteen (14) literacy program coordinators in the regional colleges, public libraries and technical institutes throughout the province of Saskatchewan was essential to the success of the project.

The Seniors' Education Centre support staff assisted in the completion this report.

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Diane Mullan
July 1992

INTRODUCTION

This report is based on the findings of the Saskatchewan Older Adult Literacy Survey. The survey involved sixteen (16) literacy programs which are currently being offered by the regional colleges, public libraries and technical institutes throughout the province of Saskatchewan.

The survey was conducted over a two month period from January 15 to March 15, 1992, by project staff at the Seniors' Education Centre, University Extension, University of Regina. Funding for the project was received from Seniors' Independence Program, Health and Welfare Canada.

GOAL OF THE SURVEY

To acquire information for an overview of the current state of older adults and literacy in Saskatchewan.

OBJECTIVES OF THE SURVEY

1. to determine the approximate number of older adults in Saskatchewan who are functionally illiterate

2. to determine the number of individuals 55 years of age or over who participate in literacy programs

3. to describe a profile of the typical older adult participant in the literacy programs based on age, gender, cultural background, education level, income, residence: rural or urban dweller

4. to record the learning resources currently being used with older adults in literacy programs

5. to interpret what may be needed in Saskatchewan in terms of functional literacy and the 55 + year old

6. to produce actionable recommendations to be considered by the Seniors' Education Centre and any other organizations involved in the Saskatchewan literacy field

SURVEY RESPONDENTS AND RESOURCE PEOPLE

Sixteen (16) literacy programs were surveyed in urban and rural centres throughout the province of Saskatchewan. (See Appendix 1 and 2.)

Two independent, volunteer-based programs serve Saskatoon and area, and Regina and area respectively: "Read Saskatoon" and the Regina Public library.

Three Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) programs were surveyed including Kelsey learning-centre serving Saskatoon and area; Palliser which is volunteer based and serves Moose Jaw and area; and Woodland serving Prince Albert and area and is also volunteer based. The fourth SIAST program, Wascana, did not have a program coordinator at the time of this survey, therefore was not included.

Of the regional college literacy programs, which are volunteer based and serve the population of the respective regions, responses were received from Carlton Trail Regional College in Humboldt, Cypress Hills Regional College in Swift Current, Northlands College in La Ronge, Creighton and Buffalo Narrows, Parkland Regional College in Yorkton, Southeast Regional College in Weyburn, Cumberland Regional College in Tisdale, and Northwest Regional College in North Battleford.

Cathy Hartman, an adult learning specialist for eleven regional colleges and two SIAST campuses that utilize volunteer tutors, was contacted for information about literacy for older adults.

Nayda Vehman, coordinator of the Saskatchewan Literacy Network, was consulted regarding various survey aspects.

Judith Hindle, author of the most current comprehensive study of adult literacy programs, LITERACY LEARNING IN SASKATCHEWAN: A REVIEW OF ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS (1989), was a generous source of contacts and insights concerning the perspectives and approach to the research material.

Finally, the project coordinator conversed and corresponded with Helen Appleton and Jean Dirk of *Something Special for Seniors*, a unique literacy program operated for, by and with older adults in cooperation with Medicine Hat College in Alberta.

METHODOLOGY

The Saskatchewan Older Adult Literacy Survey involved the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. The survey was conducted through mailed questionnaires and structured telephone interviews with

fourteen literacy program coordinators. Specific survey instruments and steps included:

1. Written questionnaires revealed demographic information about older adults who are enrolled in literacy programs. Current school year data was reported on by fourteen literacy program coordinators. Questions regarding their perceptions of the learning needs of and resources for older adult literacy in Saskatchewan were included. (See Appendix 3.)

2. In-depth structured telephone interviews with fourteen program coordinators, adults educators, researchers and administrators.

3. Review of related statistical information, documents and literature.

4. Analysis of the questionnaire and interview responses.

SURVEY PROCESS

The literacy program coordinators were contacted initially with the assistance of Jim Seiferling, Director of Adult Special Education Branch, Saskatchewan Education. A letter describing the survey project and request for their participation was sent to a provincial meeting of the program coordinators, representatives from the Saskatchewan Literacy Network, and adult education specialists held in Saskatoon on January 17, 1992. A telephone conversation with Jim Seiferling in the following week confirmed the willingness of the project coordinators to participate in the survey.

An ethical review application was completed and submitted to the Research Ethics Review Committee, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, University of Regina in January, 1992. (See Appendix 4.) Approval was received on February 11, 1992. The questionnaire was sent to sixteen literacy program coordinators on February 13, 1992 with a letter indicating that the project coordinator would contact the participants during and following the week of February 24 to discuss their responses. All of the program coordinators were interviewed, however, two did not return the questionnaire.

The telephone interviews took place over a period of three weeks, from Feb 24 to March 13, 1992. Written notes were made from the telephone responses.

DEFINITION OF LITERACY

The Statistics Canada definition of functional literacy used in the Saskatchewan Older Adult Literacy Survey was:

> The information processing skills necessary to use the printed material commonly encountered at work, at home, and in the community. (Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities, Statistics Canada, October, 1989)

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE AND THE RESEARCH

Sixty-five percent of older adults (age 55 and over) in Saskatchewan are functionally illiterate, according to estimates by Statistics Canada based on the Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities, Reading and Numeracy (Summer 1990). This means that more than 143,000 seniors in Saskatchewan may have difficulty reading medical information, understanding and filling out forms, managing finances and finding emergency phone numbers.

The following is a summary of the data received from the mailed questionnaires and telephone interviews conducted by Seniors' Education Centre project staff with literacy program coordinators to March 13, 1992. The figures represent the number of older adults registered in fourteen out of sixteen literacy programs surveyed in this project.

A) DEMOGRAPHICS

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS:

- 177 adults who are 55 years of age or over were reported as registered in the 1991-92 academic year by the 14 Saskatchewan literacy program coordinators who responded to the survey

- Estimates indicate that less than 10 % of an approximate total of 2100 learners who are currently enrolled in all of the Saskatchewan literacy programs are 55 years of age or over.

GENDER:

- 100 females and 77 males were ages 55 and over

- 56.5 % of total participants are female

- 43.5 % are male

AGE:

- 69 % of older adult participants are between ages 55 - 60.

- 15 % are between age 61 - 64

- 12 % are between age 65 - 69

- 4 % are between age 70 - 74

LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:

- 75 % of the learners had grade eight or less formal education.

9 % did not attend school
44 % had between grade 1-4
22 % between grade 5 - 8
12 % between grade 9 - 12
10 % university
1 % technical institute
1 % teachers college
1 % other

INCOME:

- Income is not recorded at all of the literacy programs. Of those that do record this information, there is a relatively balanced distribution of low to middle income participants.

- Of a total of 35 % who reported income:

59 % were low income (under 20,000 annually)
38 % were middle income (20,000 - 50,000 annually)
3 % were upper income (50,000 annually)

DWELLING:

- There was a fairly equal distribution of participants from city, town and rural dwellings, although many of the learners grew up in rural areas/or on farms.

45 % large urban
34 % small urban
21 % rural

CULTURAL HERITAGE:

- The majority of participants were Canadian born or English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Aboriginal older adults represent the smallest grouping of literacy program registrants. Of the ESL learners, many of them were not recent immigrants, but did not have an opportunity to learn English in a formal setting 25 or more years ago. A small number of the ESL learners are Canadian born.

38 % Canadian born
45 % ESL
17 % Aboriginal

OTHER:

Appendix 5 and 6 review a demographic breakdown of potential population groupings that could be served by the regional colleges, SIAST campuses, public libraries and the Seniors' Education Centre.

The following composite pictures describe typical older adult learners in the current literacy programs in Saskatchewan:

Margaret is 58 years of age. She was one of a family of eight who made their living on a farm in rural Saskatchewan. Margaret attended school for only three years before she was required to stay at home to help care for her younger siblings and to help with the farm work. Margaret married at eighteen and had five children of her own. Her husband took care of the finances, did all the banking, tax returns and read the newspaper to her. When he died a year ago she was lost. Her children encouraged her to participate in the local adult literacy program.

Peter owned and operated a restaurant in a small Saskatchewan town for 25 years. After coaxing from his family, he agreed to attend an information session about learning to read and write, offered by the regional college. Having immigrated to Saskatchewan in the 1950's, Peter didn't have the opportunity to learn English formally. He directed his energy into making a good living for his family, rather than pursuing further education.

B) REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION

The reasons for participation in literacy programs stated by older adult learners to literacy program coordinators are as diverse as any age group. Perhaps the reasons are even more varied as many seniors are less concerned with acquiring literacy skills for a job than the younger program

participants. However, common goals/themes emerged from the results of the questionnaires and telephone interviews:

1) Independence

The desire to have more independence and control over their lives was the most frequently cited reason. Often this realization is provoked by changes in an individual's life such as the loss of a spouse, retirement or children leaving home. People with poor reading skills cope by relying on family and friends for their everyday literacy needs such as banking, shopping, reading the newspaper, etc. Some successfully hide their difficulty for years. As they grow older and support systems change, they may feel helpless and afraid. Often coaxing and encouragement from family and friends to overcome their fear leads to their final decision to try a literacy program.

2) Self-esteem

The wish to improve their self-confidence or to "feel better about themselves" in participating in everyday life is a commonly stated reason. Lack of self-esteem may have many roots that have led the person to the conviction that they are "dumb". Since they feel that they can't learn, they continue to live a false life of covering up their "disability". A vicious cycle may result: low self-esteem intensifies feelings of dependency and lack of control over their lives, which increases the low self-esteem and so on.

3) Enhanced quality of life

When family or friends move away, or an older person relocates, the motivation to be able to read and write letters becomes strong.

Older adults may have more time and a stronger desire to connect meaningfully with other family members. Grandparents who participate in the literacy programs frequently identify wanting to read to their grandchildren as a main motive for learning to read. In aboriginal families and communities, the grandparents often have a substantial role in raising their grandchildren. In these cases, the motive to help their grandchildren with their homework may encourage an older adult to participate in a literacy program.

Life changes such as retirement or the loss of loved ones may precipitate a feeling of emptiness. Learning to read and write can provide meaning and purpose to life.

Reaching out for companionship from life situations which have become lonely and isolated is a commonly cited reason

for both learners and tutors to become involved in a literacy program.

The desire to participate more fully in the community has been the goal for some older adults. For example, to be able to write information for church bulletins or to join community groups without having to worry about being "discovered".

Older adults may simply wish to read for enjoyment or to have something gainful to do. After retiring from the workforce or after years of not having the time while raising a family, older adults may feel that this is finally time for them. "I have time for self now... I have wanted to learn to read for years and didn't have opportunity to go to school as a child", are statements commonly made by older adults during assessment interviews with literacy program coordinators.

Many older adults express the desire to read the Bible and participate in Bible study groups. Enhancement of their spiritual life is their primary reason for wanting to learn to read.

Others want to find out more about the world by reading the newspaper.

English as a Second Language (ESL) participants who are older adults experience the same life changes as Canadian born participants. Acculturation needs and the desire to learn better conversational English bring a large portion of ESL older adults to literacy programs.

4) Security

For some older adults, especially those aged 55-64, employment is an issue. Their job security may be threatened if they are unable to keep up with changes in technology.

For those beginning an adult basic education program, the first step may simply be learning to read.

Some older workers may need reading to gain access to other skills training such as a trades course. For example, a retired farmer wanted to take a welding course in order to fix equipment on the family farm that his son had taken over.

Older women who are widowed or divorced later in life may find themselves without any training or job skills to assist them in their entry or re-entry into the workforce. Some may come to a literacy program through programs such as

"Bridging for Women" which is part of the SIAST adult education programming.

The ability to fill out application forms for social programs is a necessity identified by some of the learners.

Older adults need to be able to read and understand medical information in order to safely use prescription drugs and make informed choices about their health.

C) BARRIERS TO OLDER ADULTS PARTICIPATION IN CURRENT LITERACY PROGRAMS

Program coordinators were asked for their perceptions of the barriers to older adults who may benefit from participating in literacy programs. Again, several themes surfaced.

1) **Negative attitudes towards self** and ability to learn.

A feeling that "I'm too old to learn" is very common among both literate and illiterate older adults. This may be coupled with negative childhood experiences with school that make coming into a new learning situation very intimidating.

A fear of failure and **low self-esteem**, common to many literacy learners, may discourage an older person from taking the risk.

There may also be a sense that it's too late now as they may not have enough time left to complete their commitment.

A self-defensive undervaluing of the ability to read and write is common e.g. **"I've gotten along so far without being able to read and I'm content the way I am."**

2) **Stigma**

When a person has covered up a problem for a long time, like alcoholism, it is difficult to finally admit it.

The older adults' conviction that they are too dumb to learn is intensified by not wanting to appear stupid in the eyes of others.

Especially in small towns, confidentiality is a concern. It is difficult for individual learners to be anonymous when the location of the literacy program may be known to all.

3) Misconceptions of others about the learning abilities of older adults

The most frequently stated objection to literacy programs for older adults is "why waste time and money on the old?" and "they are too old to learn anyway".

The adage of "older and wiser" works against older adults as others expect them to be able to read and write.

4) Gaps in current literacy programming

In general, despite an extensive campaign promoting literacy in Saskatchewan, some individuals may not be aware of the existence of literacy programs. Older adults may hold the widespread misconception that literacy programs are not for them or accessible to them. Literacy advertising primarily features younger people in the pamphlets, posters, and on television and radio. This may reinforce the misconception that older adults do not belong in a literacy program. Some of the promotion has focused on developing literacy skills for employment, which often is not of interest to the older senior.

There is currently no financial incentive for individuals to attend a literacy program. In northern Saskatchewan where unemployment is high there is little motivation to try to improve one's life.

Sometimes older adults experience deterioration in their hearing or eyesight, which may not be accommodated at a general literacy program. Using a computer or regular print materials may be difficult for those individuals. Fear of technology may be a further deterrent.

In many cases lack of transportation, particularly in rural and northern areas, may be a barrier.

Childcare for grandchildren is a concern for older adults may have total or partial caregiving responsibilities.

D) ROOTS OF ILLITERACY

In Saskatchewan, the roots of illiteracy range from environmental factors to traditional gender roles. Interviews with literacy program coordinators regarding the life histories of some of the learners, and research of the current literature provided some perspective in this area.

Older adults have seen two world wars, drought and the Depression which affected the agricultural economy of Saskatchewan. Opportunities to attend school were often limited to two or three years if at all. With each world

war, young men were sent overseas, while school aged boys and girls were required to stay home and help on the family farm. Drought and the Depression saw the closure of rural schools as school boards were unable to pay for teachers. Many families couldn't afford to send their children away to boarding schools.

In farming communities formal education beyond grade 8 was perceived as not being necessary. Everyone worked hard and had no time for "leisure" activities such as reading and writing.

Education for girls was not valued. Often in large families girls stayed home and helped their mothers with farm work and child care. Women married at a young age and had large families which created more distance between the responsibilities of everyday life and the possibility of an education.

Saskatchewan has a blend of ethnic backgrounds. English often was not the first language spoken in the childhood home of today's older adults. Some immigrated to Canada in early adulthood but were isolated at home or lived in communities where speaking, reading and writing English were not necessary.

In Northern Saskatchewan, a nomadic way of life disrupted what little formal schooling may have been available. Families moved according to fishing, hunting or trapping seasons.

Negative experiences in school may have discouraged attendance and participation especially if language and cultural differences were not tolerated.

The presence of an undetected learning disability may have convinced the individual that they were simply unable to learn.

E) HOW CAN WE REACH OLDER ADULTS?

The question remains - if potentially 143,000 older adult in Saskatchewan need literacy resources, why are only appropriately 10 % of the current learners 55 or over? The following summarizes the questionnaire and interview responses of literacy programs coordinators on the issue of reaching older adults who may benefit from a literacy program:

1) Make it accessible to them.

Reach them through their extended families, church groups and libraries. Visit seniors' centres, special care homes

and senior citizens high rises and present the concept of literacy programs for and with older adults.

Initiate a coordinated effort through the agencies that serve older adults to identify and encourage older adults with reading and writing difficulties to participate in literacy programs

Run programs in seniors residences and special care homes. Encourage reading circles, where residents may gather and listen to books or newspapers being read without having to identify themselves as "illiterate". Organize in-home peer tutoring, where literate seniors read to and with individuals and assist them in writing letters.

Provide transportation and childcare, if needed, free or at a nominal cost.

Investigate the provision of special equipment for those with low vision and hearing impairment.

2) Make it relevant to them.

Recognize the individual and cultural differences in the diverse group called "seniors". English as a Second Language (ESL) participants, Canadian-born and aboriginal older adults have a wealth of diverse experiences. (An excellent example is five radio-play episodes produced by the literacy staff at Northlands College in which the effects of illiteracy in the everyday lives of people in northern communities are portrayed. Literacy learners participated as actors in the radio plays which have been translated into three languages: Cree, Dene and English.)

Feature older adult learners and tutors of various cultural backgrounds in posters, radio and TV commercials in the promotion of literacy for and with older adults. Present success teams of learners and tutors in testimonial style advertising.

Develop learning resources that are relevant to the diverse needs, i.e. culturally, socially, economically.

Promote awareness of literacy for and with older adults through seniors' newsletters and magazines.

3) Create a peer tutoring system.

Involve literate older adults in peer tutoring. Recognize the necessity of creating support systems that allow individuals to take risks and change their lives.

4) Promote it as the life-long learning.

Call it something other than illiteracy. For example, "Something Special for Seniors", is the title of the Medicine Hat College literacy program for older adults. Re-define the problem and leave their dignity intact.

F) LEARNING RESOURCES

Literacy program coordinators cited a variety of resources which are currently being used with older adults and others.

1) **Print materials** frequently include The Laubach Literacy of Canada Series, Laubach Way to Reading, The Challenger Series and occasionally The Literacy Volunteers of America Manuals.

2) **Computer-assisted and audio-visual resources** include Hartley's computer programs (which use auditory material to back up the consonants, vowels, etc. read on the computer screen), PALS (The Principle of the Alphabet Literacy System) and Autoskills programs.

3) **Trained volunteer tutors** are involved in almost all of the literacy programs

4) Various **low vocabulary, high interest** paperbacks and **materials from everyday life**, e.g. shopping flyers, recipe books, financial forms, newspapers, magazines, catalogues are incorporated into individual's programs.

Most literacy programs use a combination of the language experience approach, which is based on the learner's immediate and long-term goals, and the more structured phonetics based programs such as The Laubach Way to Reading Series.

The Principle of the Alphabet Literacy System (PALS) program is a computer-based, interactive-instructional system, designed to teach adults reading and writing skills. PALS is used when available and appropriate for the learner.

G) WHAT IS NEEDED IN ORDER TO MEET THE NEEDS OLDER ADULT LEARNERS AND HOW CAN THE SENIORS' EDUCATION CENTRE HELP?

Canadian born, ESL and Aboriginal literacy learners have their own rich cultural heritage which can be drawn on and considered for relevant resources and teaching approaches. Literacy program coordinators were asked to describe learning resources and approaches, based on their experiences and perceptions, that would best address the diverse needs of older adult learners. A number of creative and thoughtful ideas emerged through the telephone interviews and questionnaires.

1) Educational Resource Development

Despite some recent materials development, almost all of the materials used in Saskatchewan literacy programs are American-based and geared towards younger adults. They tend to present pictures and stories which are based on "white, middle class, male" interest and experiences. It was suggested by one program coordinator that Canadian older adults literacy learners are too small a market for publishers to consider.

Saskatchewan/Canadian focused literacy materials of interest to or specifically geared towards older adult learners are badly needed. Within the population of Saskatchewan/Canadian older adults are specific cultural interests and needs of immigrant and aboriginal people which should be addressed. Some specific suggestions for resource development follow:

i) Health care information in large print and low vocabulary pamphlets on particular topics of nutrition and prescription drugs.

ii) Consumer education information such as protection from fraud and bargain shopping for low level reading.

iii) Recreational reading materials including low level vocabulary, and high interest content. For example the small town histories and one-room school house publications could be re-written for use in literacy programs. Elders stories in aboriginal cultures have been recorded and translated to simple language/large print formats. (This is currently being done in some regions of the province.)

iv) Financial and government forms.

v) Workbooks dealing with topics listed above.

2) Relevant learning and teaching approaches

Assessment of individual literacy needs and learning styles are important to the success of any program. While some older adults prefer a one-on-one tutoring situation, others may enjoy a more traditional classroom approach. It depends on the individual's needs, their past experiences and what is available to them through a particular program. A sample of the suggested learning and teaching approaches from the literacy program coordinators follows.

i) Apply a learner-directed approach with specific short and long term goals.

ii) Facilitate seniors working with seniors in a peer learning/teaching partnership. Set up peer-tutoring in seniors' complexes, recreation centres, libraries, cultural organizations and/or churches.

iii) Encourage learners to tell their own stories and have a tutor write them down. Take turns telling and writing with tutor. Using family photographs for storytelling and recording.

iv) Have learners keep journals, either written or on the computer, with a new entry each week.

v) Develop an easy-read senior-centred newsletter or have a regular column in existing literacy learner or seniors' newsletters. This is good for lesson material and recreational reading.

vi) Organize reading circles in the special care homes or set up literacy programs at seniors' residences.

vii) Have older adults with some reading ability read to young children as an intergenerational program.

viii) Help set up learner support groups to encourage them to continue in literacy programs. In seeing other people and their hardships, the elders can in turn give their encouragement to the young.

ix) Develop relevant tutor training resources. Produce a video which could be used to sensitize tutors to issues particular to older adults.

3) **Act as an educator and information clearinghouse on literacy and the older adult**

i) Compile a sheet of primary needs for older adult learners and distribute to them so that existing programs can begin to meet them.

ii) Distribute a list of older adult literacy learning resources which have been developed.

iii) Run workshops for literacy coordinators and tutors on literacy and the older adult.

G) CONCLUSIONS

Literacy programs throughout Saskatchewan have been successful in meeting the needs of a diverse population of learners who vary in age, gender, cultural heritage, income levels and rural/urban origins. To date, little has been done to explore the learning needs of and resources for and

with older adults who have poor or no reading and writing ability.

Literacy coordinators expressed interest and provided thoughtful suggestions and insights in relation to older adult literacy. They acknowledged that their resource materials and in some cases their learning environments are more suitable for younger adult learners. Demands on time and available funding restrict their ability to fully investigate this particular area of literacy.

Many of the coordinators suggested that the role the Seniors' Education Centre might play is providing further research and resource development that could be incorporated into existing literacy programs.

H) RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations represent the composite views of the project coordinator, literacy program coordinators, administrators, and others who were interviewed as part of the survey. Many recommendations have been recorded throughout this report and the main themes are reiterated here.

It is recommended that the Seniors' Education Centre at the University of Regina:

1) **Compile a bibliography of existing resources for teaching literacy with older adults and distribute to literacy programs throughout the province**

2) **Collect and develop materials which are:**

   i) Saskatchewan/Canada-based

   ii) Relevant to older adults

   iii) Reflective of the range of older adult interests and needs, including Canadian-born, ESL and aboriginal

3) **Promote the awareness of literacy for older adults**

   i) Develop posters, radio and television literacy advertising featuring older adult learners and tutors as "success teams".

   ii) Promote as lifelong learning to dilute some of the stigma attached to "illiteracy"

4) **Design and implement a pilot project for an older adult literacy program**

i) Connect with an existing literacy program. For example, Regina Public Library (RPL), has expressed initial interest in a possible joint venture with the Seniors' Education Centre.

ii) Implement peer-teaching model of seniors working with seniors in as tutor/learner partnership.

iii) Organize reading circles in seniors' residences or special care homes.

5) **Develop workshops for training tutors in rural and urban areas to work with older adult learners**

6) **Secure project funding from the following:**

National Literacy Network
Seniors' Independence Program
New Horizons
Bequests to the Seniors' Education centre for literacy education for and with seniors
Other

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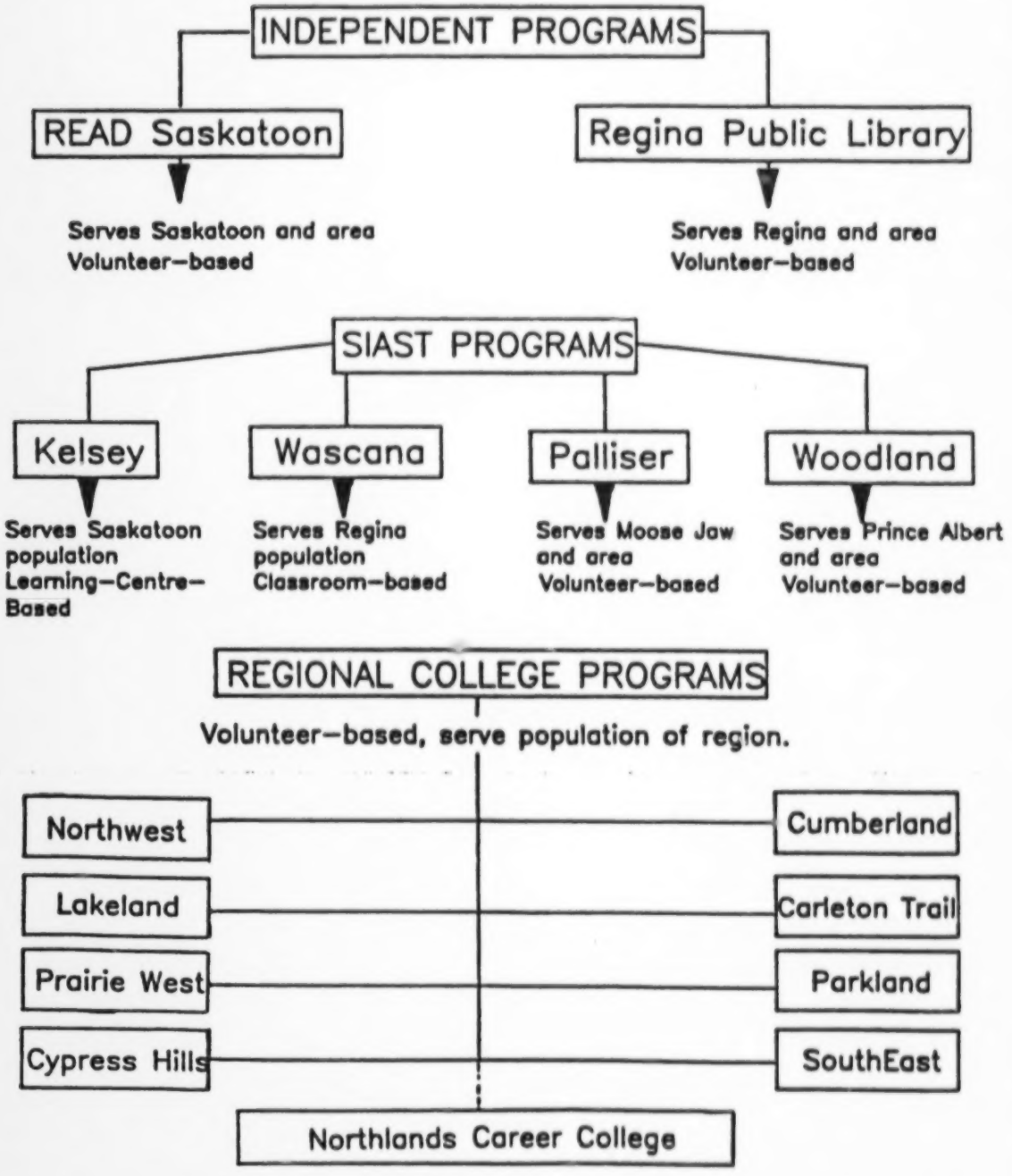
The Saskatchewan Senior Citizens' Provincial Council in Consultation with Off-Reserve Indian and Metis. A Study of the Unmet Needs of Off-Reserve Indian and Metis Elderly in Saskatchewan. Regina: The Saskatchewan Seniors' Citizens' Provincial Council, June 1988.

APPENDIX 1

Figure 4
Types of Literacy Programs
Funded by the 1987–1990
Saskachewan Literacy Campaign

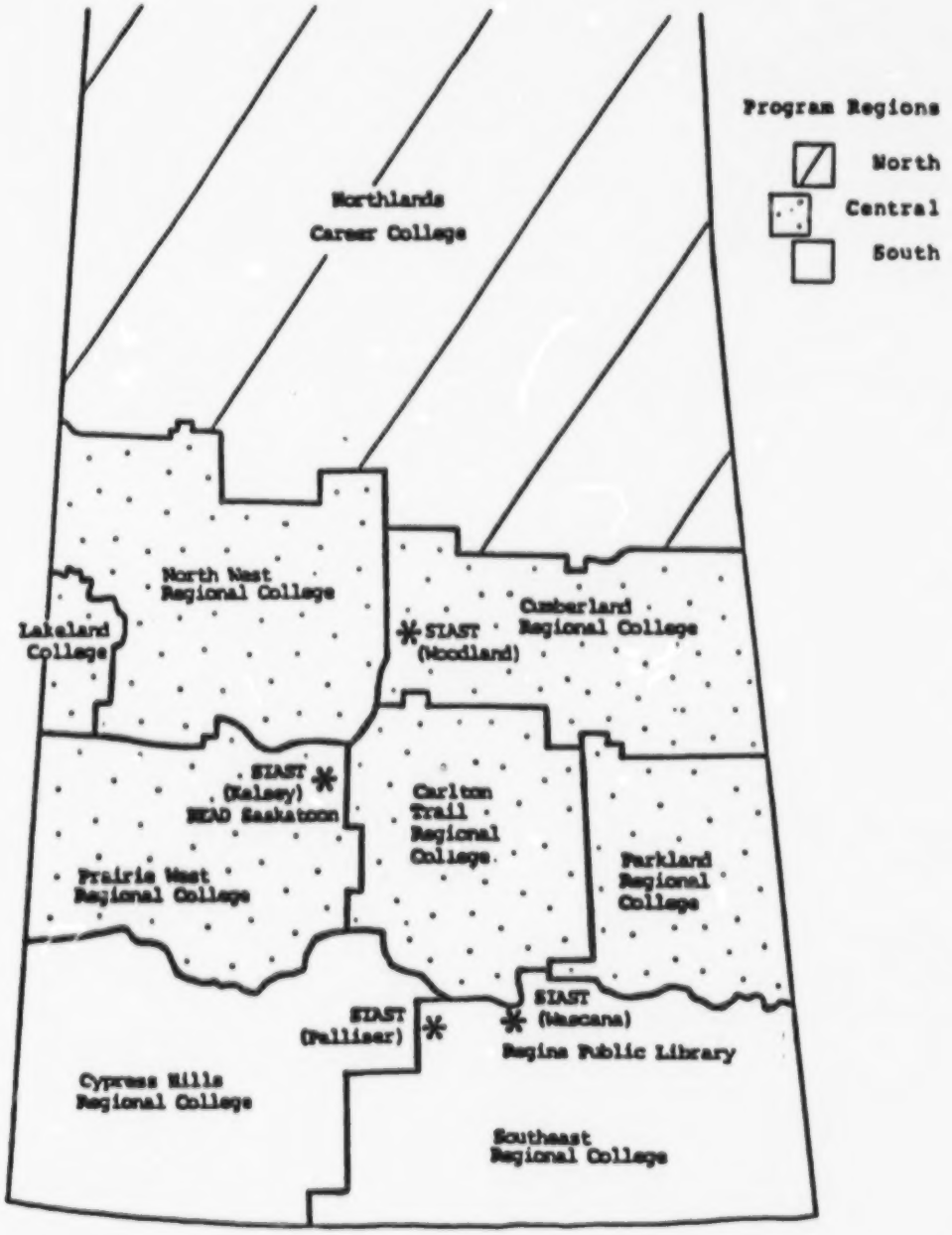


SOURCE: Literacy Learning In Saskatchewan: A Review of Adult Literacy Programs. Regina: Faculty of Education, University of Regina, 1989.

APPENDIX 2

Figure 5

Geographical Distribution and Areas Served by 15 Saskatchewan Literacy Programs



SOURCE: Literacy Learning in Saskatchewan: A Review of Adult Literacy Programs. Regina: Faculty of Education, University of Regina, 1989.

APPENDIX 3

SASKATCHEWAN OLDER ADULTS LITERACY SURVEY

PROGRAM COORDINATOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions in as much detail as possible:

1. How many older adults 55 years of age or older are registered as a learner in your centre's literacy program, in the current school year?

2. What is the profile of older adult literacy learners in your centre's program?

Please estimate the number within each category:

GENDER: Number of males____ Number of females____

AGE:

____55 - 60
____60 - 64
____65 - 69
___70 - 74
___75 - 79
___80 - 84
___85 +

LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:

_____Did not attend school
_____Grade 1 - 4
_____Grade 4 - 8
_____Grade 9 - 12
_____Technical Institute
_____University
_____Teachers College
_____Other

INCOME LEVEL:

_____Low income (under 20,000 annually)
_____Middle income (20,000 to 50,000)
_____Upper income (50,000 and over annually)

DWELLING:

_____Major urban (population 50,000 - 200,000)
_____Minor urban (population 5000 - 50,000)
_____Rural (under 5000)

Cultural Heritage: (as related to type of literacy programming)

_____Canadian born
_____ESL
_____Aboriginal

3. What reasons for participation in the program are commonly stated by older adult literacy learners in your centre?

4. How can we reach other older adults who may benefit from a literacy program?

5. What learning resources are being used in your program?

_____printed material
_____audio-visual
_____computer-assisted programs
_____resource people (i.e. volunteer tutors etc.)

Please include any titles or references you would recommend for teaching older adults.

6. What is needed by literacy programs in Saskatchewan in order to meet the needs of seniors who are functionally illiterate?

7. How can the Seniors' Education Centre at the University of Regina help?

8. Other comments or recommendations.

THANK YOU FOR FILLING OUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. A SUMMARIZED FORM WILL BE MAILED TO YOU.

APPENDIX 4

HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Application for Approval of Research Procedures

SECTION I: IDENTIFICATION AND PURPOSES

1. Date: January 16, 1992

Name of Applicant: Diane Mullan, Seniors' Education Centre

Address: University of Extension, University of Regina S4S 0A2

Title of Research: Older Adult Literacy Survey

2. If the project will be part of a thesis, or class requirement, give the name of the supervisor:

Department or Faculty:

3. Purposes. Give a brief outline of the main features and variables of the research problem. Include a brief statement which describes the significance and potential benefits of the study.

Sixty-five percent of older adults in Saskatchewan are functionally illiterate, according to a recent Statistics Canada survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities, Reading and Numeracy (Summer 1990). This means that more than 143,000 seniors in Saskatchewan may have difficulty reading medical information, understanding and filling out forms, managing finances and finding emergency phone numbers.

The Seniors' Education Centre proposes to design and implement a telephone and questionnaire survey which will be circulated to literacy programs throughout the province. The results will lay the preparatory work to help remove a significant learning barrier to literacy education for and with older adults, and to delineate actionable recommendations for future project consideration by the Seniors' Education Centre.

Through the survey we will determine:

- a glimpse of illiteracy and older adults in Saskatchewan

- the number of individuals 55 years or over who currently participate as learners in literacy programs

- a profile of the typical older adult participant in the literacy programs based on age, gender, cultural background, educational attainment, income level, rural or urban dweller

- what functional literacy learning resources are being used for and with older adults i.e. printed material, audio/visual, computer, resource persons

- what is needed in Saskatchewan in terms of functional literacy and the 55 + year old

- actionable recommendations to be considered by the Senior's Education Centre and possibly other organizations involved in the Saskatchewan literacy field

SECTION II: SUBJECTS

1. Briefly describe the number and kind of subjects required for data collection.

Fifteen literacy program coordinators throughout the province will be surveyed through a mailed questionnaire and a telephone interview regarding their observations, insights and information concerning the older adult learners in their programs, resources used and identified areas of need.

2. What information about the research problem and their role in the project will potential subjects be given?

The survey participants will be given an invitational letter to explain the extent and the implications of illiteracy among seniors. (Please see attached.)

3. How will the consent of the subjects to participate be obtained?

The participants will be sent an invitational letter and consent form.
(Please see attached)

4. What will the subjects be required to do in the course of the project?

The literacy program coordinators will be surveyed by mailed questionnaire and telephone interview. They will be assured that their participation is voluntary. (Please see attached).

5. What assurances will the subjects be given and what precautions will be taken regarding the confidentiality of the data or information which they provide in the study?

The questionnaire responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. The results of the questionnaires will be summarized in a final report. The original data will be secured in a confidential file at the Seniors' Education Centre.

6. Will children be used as a source of data? No.

7. Will the researcher or any member of the research team be in a position of power or authority in relation to his subjects? (For example: A teacher doing research and using her class as subjects or a counsellor collecting research data from his clients.

No. Research is to be conducted in a collaborative manner between the researcher and the program coordinators. Both parties are concerned about identifying the needs of older adults who may be functionally illiterate. The summarized results will be shared by all the respondents involved.

8. Will deception of any kind be necessary in the project?

No.

SECTION III: ACCESS TO DATA AND FINDINGS

1. Who will have access to the original data of the study?

The program research is being conducted by the Seniors' Education Centre at University Extension, University of Regina for Seniors' Independence Program, Health and Welfare Canada. A report summarizing the data will be published and made available through the Centre. The researcher and the project supervisor will have access to the original data of the study.

2. Will subjects have some access to the findings of the study?

The survey participants will have access to the summarized and published results. A summary of the final report will be sent to each of the respondents and literacy program centres.

3. What will be the final disposition of the original data after the study is completed?

The final disposition will be a summarized report on the general state of illiteracy among older adults in Saskatchewan, which will be placed in the University of Regina Library. Participants will be assured of the security of the original data, which will be kept on file at the Seniors' Education Centre.

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:

_____

SIGNATURE OF ADVISOR OR INSTRUCTOR:

_____

Letter to Literacy Program Coordinators:

Dear_____,

An estimated 65% of older adults in Saskatchewan are functionally illiterate, according to estimates by Statistics Canada based on the survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities, Reading and Numeracy (Summer 1990). This means that more than 143,000 seniors in Saskatchewan may have difficulty reading medical information, understanding and filling out forms, managing finances and finding emergency phone numbers.

The Seniors' Education Centre (SEC), University Extension, University of Regina, for the last 14 years has been serving the learning needs of older adults in Regina, and during the last several years throughout Saskatchewan. (See attached brochure). The SEC staff is conducting preliminary research which will be used to determine some of the learning needs of older adults in Saskatchewan who are illiterate. We invite programmers and workers in the field to help us determine the Centre's role, if any, in terms of literacy and older adults in Saskatchewan.

Enclosed is a questionnaire through which we hope to capture your observations and insights regarding the older adult literacy learners and their needs. Participation in the survey is voluntary. I will telephone you during the week of _____ to discuss your response.

Thank you for your assistance. If you wish further information or clarification I can be reached at 779-4847.

Sincerely,

Diane Mullan
Coordinator
Seniors' Education Centre
Older Adult Literacy Survey

Consent form:

I_____voluntarily agree to participate in The Older Adult Literacy Questionnaire and Telephone Survey, dated _____, 1992. I understand that the survey is being conducted by Seniors' Education Centre which will assist SEC to determine some of the learning needs of older adults in Saskatchewan who are illiterate. I understand that the information and insights that I offer will be summarized in a final report which will assure the anonymity of my responses. The raw data will be kept on file at the University of Regina A final summarized report will be sent to me or my centre.

_____

SIGNATURE

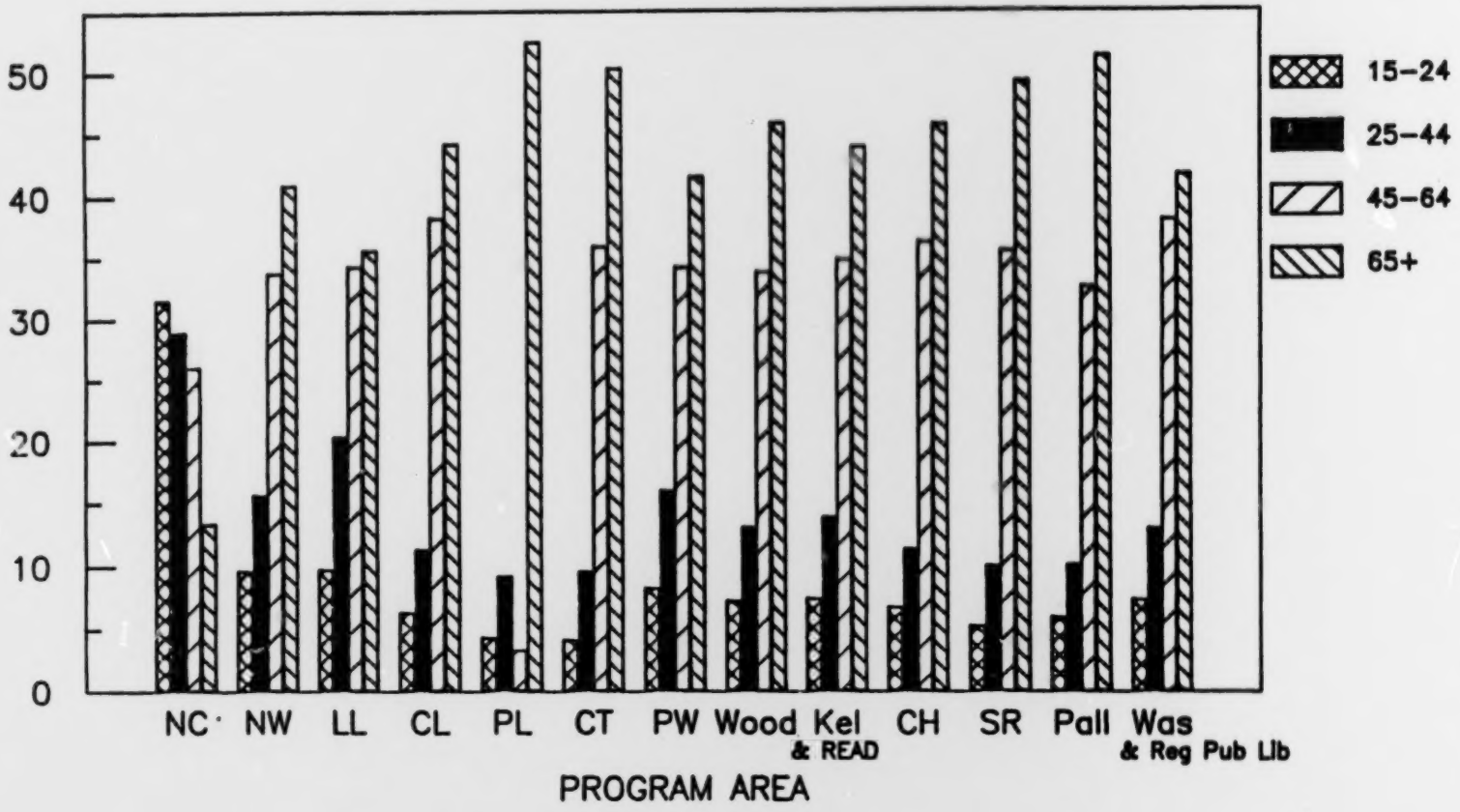
_____

DATE

APPENDIX 5

Figure 9

Populations 15 Years of Age and Older Who Have Not Attended School Beyond the Grade 8 Level by Age Groups According to Program Area (1986 Census)



SOURCE: Literacy Learning in Saskatchewan: A Review of Adult Literacy Programs. Regina: Faculty of Education, University of REgina, 1989.

APPENDIX 6

Table 4

Populations* 15 Years of Age and Older Who Have Not Attended School Beyond the Grade 8 Level by Age Groups and Gender According to Program Area (1986 Census)

PROGRAM REGION/ Program	GENDER AND AGE GROUPS BY YEARS 15-24 Male	15-24 Female	25-44 Male	25-44 Female	45-64 Male	45-64 Female	65+ Male	65+ Female	Total
NORTH									
Northlands Career College	1,160	935	1,000	920	925	805	490	400	6,635
CENTRAL									
North West Regional College	935	690	1,610	1,015	3,145	2,525	3,495	3,355	16,770
Lakeland College	110	85	280	125	395	290	385	325	1,995
Cumberland Regional College	455	270	850	440	2,620	1,730	2,690	2,345	11,400
Parkland Regional College	515	320	1,065	680	3,575	2,860	4,750	5,230	18,995
Carlton Trail Regional College	390	205	930	450	2,980	2,165	3,700	3,495	14,315
Prairie West Regional College	490	265	880	570	1,885	1,235	2,105	1,680	9,110
SIAST (Woodland), Prince Albert	155	155	310	245	645	795	865	1,085	4,255
SIAST (Kelsey), Saskatoon & RRAD Saskatoon	610	545	1,245	885	2,655	2,730	2,905	3,890	15,465
SOUTH									
Cypress Hills Regional College	355	295	690	400	2,010	1,475	2,270	2,120	9,615
Southeast Regional College	555	300	1,055	570	3,610	2,140	4,200	3,755	16,185
SIAST (Palliser), Moose Jaw	160	90	215	205	670	685	1,035	1,095	4,155
SIAST (Wascana), Regina & Regina Public Library	660	470	1,045	920	2,880	2,910	2,480	3,870	15,235
PROVINCIAL TOTALS	6,550	4,625	11,175	7,425	28,000	22,340	31,370	32,645	144,130

* Numbers rounded off to the nearest 5.

SOURCE: Literacy Learning in Saskatchewan: A Review of Adult Literacy Programs. Regina: Faculty of Education, University of Regina, 1989.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX 7

SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR SENIORS - ONE MODEL

Medicine Hat College is an established leader in the literacy field. Based upon a needs assessment survey directed to seniors by MHC which sent the message "I want to improve my reading and writing skills."

The program received funding from National Literacy Network with the assistance of One Voice - the National Seniors' Network and opened in 1990. The program is unique and successful in many ways:

1) Run by and taught by seniors

2) Learner directed - individualized program based upon the identified needs and interests of learners

3) Volunteer tutors - peer tutoring

4) Confidentiality

5) One on One sessions

6) No charge to the learners

Goals of the program:

1) Increase the safety of people who may be in jeopardy by not being able to read medical prescriptions, labels of cleaners, etc.

2) Foster independence

3) Increase self-esteem and confidence

4) Enhance their way of life

Patti Martineau was a part-time person with MHC, hired under the Community Education Division to look after programs for seniors. Surveys and meetings revealed that what was really needed was a literacy program for seniors. Her advisory committee came from the community, Veiner Centre (MH's Seniors Centre) and the existing literacy program at MHC.

The design of the program grew out of the experience of the College with existing literacy projects, recognizing that the motivation behind seniors is different from other participants. Older adults really do want to improve the quality of their life rather than acquiring just the skills necessary for a job.